

MEMORIAL

FOR *the Scottish Church*

The Members to be Chosen

TO

Represent this CHURCH, at the ensuing General Assembly,

HUMBLY OFFERED,

BY

An Elder of the Church of SCOTLAND.

Reverend and Honourable Fathers, and Brethren,

I Crave Leave to be your Remembrancer with all dutiful Respect, as to some Things of great Weight in the present juncture. 1st. It was the Glory of this Church, that for about Fifty Years together, after our Reformation from Popery, we continued free, both of Error and Schism. And afterwards, when *Antichristian Prelacy*, with *Romish Trumpets*, was thrust in upon us, and supported by the most cruel Persecutions, and Barbarities; yet some honest Testimony was born to our received Worship, Discipline and Government. No Party amongst us maintained *Popish* Errors. Once indeed we had the sharp Trial, that a Deluge of Errors and Heresies broke in amongst us, at the Advantage of a conquering Enemy, when the *English* Sectaries got Footing here, and set us under their Foot, for a considerable



siderable Number of Years ; nevertheless all that Time they could Profelyte no Party amongst us, to espouse their Errors. A few, I confess, were charmed to some Liking of the Congregational Way. But as these were very inconsiderable, so neither did they continue. In the mean Time, the Church and Nation adhered to our Covenanted Doctrine and Discipline; and did also signalize themselves for inviolable Loyalty amidst many strong Temptations from a victorious Usurper, at the Head of a powerful Army, flushed with unexpected Successes. But now while we enjoy Quietness and Liberty, it's Matter of heavy Regret, that the poisonous Leaven of Error should ferment and spread so strongly.

2^{dly}. It's humbly tendered to your serious Consideration, That judicious and godly Persons in forreign Places, think strange, and lament, That this Church hath not taken the Affair of Professor *Simson* into their own Hands, and have declined to appoint an Enquiry to be made in Name of the Church of *Scotland*, into the Errors, he is alledged to have owned, and taught ; Instead of which, they have obliged the Reverend Mr. *Webster* to a laborious and difficult Pursuit, as if it had been a personal Affair of his, and did not equally, yea, and much more concern the whole Church. To set this Matter in some Evidence of Light, I tender the following Particulars to your serious Consideration.

1st. This Method of proceeding was proposed in full Assembly, when the Business of the Professor was tabled before them. The Reverend Mr. *Webster* laid it at their Feet, as an important Concern of the whole Church, and declared his utter Aversion to intermeddle in a personal Way ; yet withal did signifie his hearty Willingness to give all the Assistance, that might be within his Reach, providing the Assembly would proceed in the Way desired.

2^{dly}. Neither was this the Sentiment of Mr. *Webster* alone : Several Honourable and Grace Members of that Venerable Assembly were of the same Judgment.

3^{dly}. With all due Respect to our very Reverend Assemblies, I represent, That personal Prosecutions in the Affair of Error, are manifestly, and in the Nature of the Thing, obnoxious to such Inconveniences as are most hurtful to the Cause, and favourable on the Side of Error. I shall give but a few Hints, which I presume ye will find very plain. This Method tends clearly towartis the Prevention of any Pursuits in such a Cause, considering how Matters are stated with poor sinful Men. For in Regard of the *Selfish* and *Selfishness*, with the *Timidity* of Nature in many ; it is presumable, That not one of an Hundred will adventure upon a Pursuit in this Case, when he knows before Hand, that the Church will not assist him as they refused to the Reverend Mr. *Webster*. The Patrons of Error have ordinarily a strong Party, who more openly, or secretly favour them, and they are assured of their utmost Assistance, ere they broach their own dangerous Opinions. The poisonous Leaven hath usually spread its Contagion very far, and gone deep ere it appears more openly ; and they who may have Thoughts of a Pursuit, in such Events,

are not readily ignorant of this, nor will fail to *fit down and count the Cost*, ere they adventure on such a difficult Project. Please take a little Glance. 1st. They must lay their Account to travel the Length of the Radical Judicatory, of which the Person accused is a Member; there they must attend, and in Case the Presbytery favour the Party lybelled, the Pursuit is at the greatest Disadvantage, and the Pursuer may readily be discouraged, and Incumb, having no Assistance from the Church. But, to take the Matter by the very best Handle; what tho' he should persist, and finding himself leas'd, should appeal to a higher Court; beside that he thereby stateth the Court appealed from, a Party against him, and is lyable to all the Exceptions they can make against his Management, which may perhaps defeat the Pursuit, because of some Informalities, and bring himself into the Lurch. I say, besides what's plainly supposable on this Head, though the Affair should be fairly brought to a higher Judicatory, and failing of Redress there, should be carried to the highest in due Form; the Pursuer must still follow it out, and attend all this while. And when the Process is brought the Length of an Assembly, that great Court cannot find Leisure to examine and cognosce upon it: it must by them be referred to some Committee; and much depends upon the Choice of such a Committee, which, if swaying, in a great Part towards the Side of the pursued, will embarras and intangle the Pursuer so much the more. Thus the Matter is tossed from Committee to Committee: He is wise indeed, who can tell how long. These are no foolish and remote Suppositions; whoever acteth wisely, must lay his Account with them. 2^{dly}. In regard such Pursuits are reckoned very provoking, the Pursuer cannot readily escape all possible Recriminations by the pursued, and these who take his Part. He must lay his Account, to have his Conduct canvassed and sifted to the Outmost, and every Shadow grasped at, with the greatest Eagerness, for bringing him under Discredit. And if any thing can be found in his Management, that's justly exceptionable (which may readily befall) he must make his Reckoning, that such Things will be aggravated to the highest Pinacle. And who knows what Lies and Calumnies may be invented, and tossed upon that Occasion, and all to blacken the Pursuit, while in the mean Time, the Favourers of the pursued are busied inventing their Legends, concerning his Piety, Learning and eminent Vertues. These, with other such Difficulties, will readily fall under the View of any, who deliberately considers such a Pursuit; which being maturely pondered, together with the great Fatigue and Expences he must needs undergo (and deserve Consideration in their own Place) will go far to deter one, or other, from meddling such Processes, in Matters which are no personal Concerns, but do equally, and yet more affect the whole Church, than any particular Member. Thus the poisonous Leaven spreads, while no Man is like to make it his Business to stop the Diffusion. And if the Church will not interest her self, without some Pursuer, or

refuseth to take the Load off from his Shoulders, who may adventure to state a Process. Behold, here a more effectual Toleration is granted to Error, than any that a State can enact, especially if these deluding Interprizes be managed with Art, as they fail not to be. Error is a chief Project of lying, and murdering Spirits, for destroying the Churches of CHRIST; and they will take Care to choose the fittest Tools. I confess, That the Researches of Error ly open to Difficulties, in whatsoever Method they be Managed; especially after these Tares are multiplied, and have taken strong and deep Roots, through Neglect of the Watchmen: And the Cure of Eating Cankers is still uneasy. But so much the less Cause is there for rolling over such a Business upon the Shoulders of any one Person. The harder the Work be, the more skilful Hands, and the greater Number are necessarily required; And the forementioned, or the like Difficulties are more easily prevented or redressed, under the Churches Management, than when such Pursuits ly open to the Mistakes of weaker Hands: So much for the Third Particular, viz. The Inconveniencies of Personal Prosecutions in this Affair. I shall *Fourthly*, Adventure a little higher, and make some Enquiry into the Divine Institution about these Matters. I acknowledge, an Undertaking of so much Weight may readily suffer in so weak an Hand: Yet my poor Essay may give Occasion to others for setting that Business in some full Evidence of Light. Were there any Divine Appointment of Personal Prosecutions in the present Matter. I should soon yield the Cause, and plead no longer on the Score of Inconveniencies; But to me the Scriptures of Truth seem to look a quite contrary Way. 1st. The Body of Sound Interpreters do (so far as I have hitherto understood) carry the Lord's Commands, both with respect to Error, and other Disorders. *First*, to the Church. *A Man that is an Heretick after the first or second Admonition reject*, or cast out. These assuredly are Church Acts, and so understood by the Cloud of Faithful Interpreters. They ought to take Care of the LORD's Vineyard, and to take the little * Foxes, which spoil the tender Vines, Whatever Deficiencies may be in the Point of Delating, And touching Scandals in the Conversation of Professing People, the Charge is given primarily to the Church, as our Eminent Divines have still understood it. *If any Man* (saith the Apostle) *obey not our Word by this Epistle* † *Note that Man, &c.* Let the Church especially put a Mark upon him. And what if none should Complain? (such may be the Degeneracy in particular Churches) must Scandals be Tolerated on that Pretext? Our Assemblies have interested themselves in Points of Disorder as to Church Communion, and have made these the Church's Business, and Prosecuted them in their own Name with Vigour enough. And must the Poysonous Gangrene of Error be no Concern of the Church, and be suffered to spread, unless some Person (and under the heaviest Discouragements) undertake the Prosecution. We our selves acknowledge, that a *Fama Clamosa* my sufficiently found

† Tit. 3. 10. * Song 2. 15. † 2. Thes. 3. 14.

found the Churches Pursuit in the Matter of Scandal : And is Error of no less moment? Sure it is more infectious. And (allow me to say it) there was more than a *Fama Clamosa* in Mr. *Simson's* Case; for two Presbyteries Delated him to the Assembly, and instructed their Commissioners, to move that the Church should enquire into the Matter, and yet this may not be made the Churches Business! What can Impartial Beholders think! 2^{dly}, The Designation of *Watchmen* * which the Spirit of GOD giveth to the Overseers of the Church, beareth clearly the Obligation that lyeth upon them to make the Affair of Error their Business. It were a sorry Inspection of *Watchmen*, should they suffer a whole City to be Murdered, unless a Potent Poysoner were Prosecuted before them by some particular Citizen? I need not enlarge a Remark so very obvious. 3^{dly}, I Appeal to the first Christian and New Testament Assembly at *Jerusalem*, † Here we have a leading Instance, and a clear Rule laid before us by an Assembly under the Conduct of Men Divinely Inspired, and who might truly say, *It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us*. An Error had sprung up in the Primitive Virgin Church; Namely *Certain Men which came from Judea had taught the Brethren: Except ye be * Circumcised after the Manner of Moses ye cannot be saved*. What was the Management of the Apostles and Elders in this Case? Did they Sift, until some one or other had the Courage to commence a Process? Nay, the Church made the Affair it's own Business, and met about the Matter in a Judicative Capacity, as may be seen at more length in the History. Suffer me a little to run the Parallel; *Certain Men have arisen amongst us, who teach strange, but no less, yea, and more Dangerous Doctrines: For Instance, they call in question Adam's Federal Headship, and Assert a sure Connection between Moral Seriousness and Saving Grace. They Aver, That the Number of the Saved is equal to, Yea, and greater than that of the Damned; And that all Infants Christian and Heathen, dying in their Non-Age are Saved, being Born in an Estate of Favour, from which nothing can cast them out; But a Rejection of the offered Salvation; And that this Salvation is explicitly or implicitly offered unto all, both within, and without the Church, with a great deal more Rotten and Poysonous Pelagian Stuff, all tending to exalt corrupt Nature. This is observed, Judicatories find Fault with it, some of them Attempt to lay it before the whole Representative Church, yet they are born down and Discouraged. A great Party Conspires to crush the very first Motions, tho' but humbly craving an Inquiry. Nevertheless it comes before our Assemblies at length; And their Conduct is such, as I love not to Repeat. They will not make it their Business, nor do they attempt to Meet *ex professo* upon that Head. Nay the Reverend Mr. *Webster* who had but an equal Interest with others, tho' Honoured to stir more in that Matter! Mr. *Webster*, I say, must be obliged to an uneasy Pursuit, and the Assembly refuseth*

* Ezek. 3. 17. and 33. 7. Heb. 13. 17. † Acts 15. 1. ‡ Vers. 5. 28. * Gal. 5. 1. 2.

eth to grant his humble Petition, earnestly craving the Appointment of some little Assistance, tho' upon Solemn Promise to interest none in the Cause but himself. Now after all, dare we hold up our Faces, and think, or say, that, we have sincerely followed the Scriptural Pattern in Professor *Smitsen's* Affair. So much for this Head. I Represent y^e. That the Churches of CHRIT from their first and Purest Times have endeavoured to follow the Apostolical Pattern, and are not accustomed to make the Business of Error a Personal Business. Here I might give large and Circumstanced Accounts from the first Records of Church History to following Ages, and to Times, within the Compass of our own Memory. But, such a Labour would carry me too far, and is not necessary, while I Write to Persons much better Versed in these Matters. Only allow me to give a slender Touch. This was not the Method of the first four General Councils, so far as I could find, in the Matter of Error. Neither did the Renowned Synod which met at *Dordrecht*, near the beginning of the last Age, oblige any to a Personal Prosecution of the *Arminians*, nor any Leader of them. That Church made it their own Business. And in our Times *Roel's* and *Leenhof's* Errors were Condemned in the *Netherlands*, and Intrants into the Ministry obliged by the Classes there to Renounce them. There was no Personal Prosecution in that Matter. And I remember that several Years ago, when I was occasionally at *Rotterdam*, the *Classis* (or Presbytery) there, took Notice of some Erroneous Positions peeping out among the *French* Refugees, and obliged the Suspected Persons to Renounce them ; As of Old, the *Classis* at *Amsterdam*, had obliged *Jacobus Arminius* while he was one of the Ministers of that City, to Renounce the Errors he had begun to vent. In all these Transactions no Load was laid upon any Person to state and follow out a Process, Yea, even our Congregational Brethren in *New England* (who are not the greatest Friends to the Just Power of Church Judicatories) Yet in the Affair of Error, did meet in a General Synod, Condemned some dangerous Errors sprung up amongst them, and ordered a vigorous Prosecution by the several Churches of every one who presumed to vent the Condemned Errors. I know it will be Objected, That our Assemblies have proceeded in this Matter, according to their own Acts, which were made upon mature Deliberation ; and as it is presumable, they knew best the Circumstanced state of this Church, to which they adjusted them, so it may be justly accounted intollerable Presumption in any Member of this Church at one dash, to condemn the whole Church. I Answer, that I owe, and do sincerely pay dutiful Respect to this Church and her Assemblies, tho' I lament much want of the Zeal and Integrity which signalized us in former and purer Times. I am also well satisfied with the Act, which obligeth to Commence Processes against Ministers at the Radical Judicatories of which they are Members, and that the steps should be taken, and Methods used, to which

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our Form of Process directs. All this I Acknowledge, is wisely Ordered and well Inacted by the very Reverend and Honourable Compilers, and ought to hold in ordinary Cases, but as the choicest Rules of humane Framing, admit of some Exception, so there are Specialities in the Affair of Error, which render other Methods necessary. Scandals of Practice, are held in general Detestation, no Person pleads for them, and they are not so Infectious, but that the usual Steps may be taken in the Process, and competent time for that Effect may be bellowed without Hurt. Pursuers may be also necessary in these Events, and yet the Church may proceed without them upon a *fama clamosa*. Nevertheless, there are Specialities in the Matter of Error, which require that the Church should make it her own Business. Errors are not ordinarily broached, until the Favourers of them be so Strengthened, that scarce any Accuser shall dare to appear against them, especially when at the forementioned or the like Disadvantages; and thus the Poison destroys without Controul, unless the Church Interpose. Besides, that a personal Prosecution in such Cases is so difficult, invidious, and lyable to such manifold Checks, that few will be found, both able and willing for such an Enterprize: And Persons of Eminency, may readily be doubtful, whether the LORD call them to set their Faces against Streams so very strong, or may be tempted to desist from such Pursuits in Case they enter upon them, because of the Difficulties and Discouragements that attend these Processes. Moreover, Errors in a Church are like a spreading Gangrene or a House set on Fire. No delay may take place in such Events, but all Hands ought to be at Work immediately, in the first place, to put a stop to the Progress, and afterwards to use the speediest, and most effectual Methods, for removing the Causes. This hard and important Work, the Churches of CHRIST have from the Beginning usually accounted their own Business. 6ly. It may be considered, that some Errors vented by a late Probationer, and Published in a Print by him, and which were much of a bind with these alledged against Mr. *Simson*. These Errors, I say, were brought to a quicker Issue. The Reverend Presbytery of Edinburgh Cognosced upon them, and took that Probationer's License from him; That Business was managed without any Personal Pursuit. 7ly. It is earnestly desired by many Judicious and Godly in the Land, that besides others, two Resolutions and Deeds of the Reverend Committee in Mr. *Simson's* Affair, may be specially considered, which seem to put a sad and effectual Check upon any Process in the Point of Error. 1st. The Erronious Positions charged on Mr. *Simson*, were so Sensed by that Committee, and allowed to be Relevant only in these Senses, That neither could the Probation by Witnesses be Possible in these Events, for Witnesses cannot prove a Sense. And Moreover, several of these Senses are so Constrained, That almost any Hetrodox Position, may be dragged into Orthodoxy by such Strainings. 2dly. They resolved, That no Probation by Witnesses should be admitted, unless the Witnesses could Depone upon the *Ipso*

without Addition, Diminution or the least Alteration. Now by such dealing, tho' the grossest Heresies were Preached in the Hearing of Thousands, it were a vain Attempt to intent a Process against the Preacher; Seing it's fairly Presumable, That Two concurring Witnesses would not be easily found amongst them all, that could Depone upon the very Words, without the Alteration of any one Particle. It's earnestly desired, that the Venerable Assembly would Remove these Obstructions.

After all, for as much as the Tares of Error are Sown, and Springing up in this Church, where the Increase must needs be Great, while the necessary Pursuits are at the Disadvantages which render them almost utterly Impracticable. It is the humble and earnest Desire of many Judicious and Godly Persons, both in this and other Churches, that not only the Affair of Professor *Simson* may be brought to a just Issue, but that also, the venerable ensuing Assembly would consider and make such Acts, as they in their Wisdom, and under the Divine Conduct, may find Necessary and Proper, for Purging out that Poisonous Leaven which hath Fermented many amongst us, and is still spreading. I shall be very far from Prescribing to that Great and Venerable Court, I only Represent this plain Overture, with all dutiful Submission, Namely, That they would Condemn by a Solemn Act, the spreading Errors, which are like to prevail amongst us, and may be easily specified upon no great Inquiry, and that they would appoint the Judicatories of this National Church, to take a close and narrow Inspection of the Ministers and Members thereof, who may be Tainted with the same, after they have strictly Prohibited the venting of such Errors; And that they would not suffer these Matters any longer, to depend upon Personal Prosecutions, which it is not to be thought, that any will Adventure upon, after the Discouragements which the present depending Pursuit hath Laboured under, and that they would oblige all Intrants into the Ministry to renounce these Errors.

I shall Conclude with this one Remark; That the Assembly in the 15 of the *Act*, the sole Pattern in the Word of GOD we have for our General Assemblies, did not busie themselves with any thing but the suppressing of Error, for they Reckoned that an Affair of the highest Importance. And seing *quibet licet supplicare*, I do most humbly beg the Venerable Assembly, as they Tender the Purity of our Doctrine, and the Peace of this Church, to consider the Affair Judicially, and by themselves, without referring it to a Committee, and giving Implicite Faith to their Report; And tho' the bulk of the Committee's Procedure may frighten some Members, from granting this my humble desire, yet the Reversing the Dissents made by several Reverend and Worthy Members of the Committee formerly appointed, will not be a Work of so long a Time, as the Assembly in some Diets cannot consider.

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